



SOUTH OF MAIN REINVESTMENT AREA REPORT & ACTION PLAN

Winter - Spring 1994

CONTENTS

| | | |
|---|----|---|
| SOUTH OF MAIN REINVESTMENT AREA | 2 | |
| COLUMBUS COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT AREAS 1990 - 1996 | | 4 |
| SOUTH OF MAIN: A VERY HUMAN HISTORY | 6 | |
| GETTING STARTED IN SOUTH OF MAIN | 8 | |
| PLAN SUMMARY | 13 | |
| PLANS FOR ACTION | 17 | |
| CURRENT IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITY | 30 | |
| NEXT STEPS | 31 | |

SOUTH OF MAIN REINVESTMENT AREA

Beginning in March, individuals living, working, or owning property in or near the South of Main Reinvestment Area met to take a good look at their neighborhood as it is now and make choices to direct its future. Over sixty dedicated people participated in a series of three Saturday workshops and several smaller task force group sessions. Community members met with each other, city staff, and individuals with a variety of expertise, to develop activities that will positively affect their community.

This report serves as a document and collective memory of what took place from November 1993 through April 1990, when community members began organizing for and holding workshops in a small portion of the Near East Side community. It contains a prioritized list of activities that participants hope will foster new partnerships for getting things done in the community, as well as strengthen partnerships already working to make the South of Main community a good place to work and call home.

The South of Main Reinvestment Area is located in the southeastern portion of the Near East Side. It is one of six community reinvestment areas designated in Columbus' older city neighborhoods. The other reinvestment areas selected for the period of 1990 through 1996 are Hilltop I & II, Windsor Terrace, Italian Village, and Southwood. They were selected using criteria developed by the Mayor's Housing and Neighborhood Development Committee in 1993. Through the reinvestment program, the city is making a firm commitment to a "bottom-up," rather than "top-down" approach to neighborhood revitalization.

The South of Main reinvestment planning area is roughly bounded on the north by Main Street, on the south by Interstate 70, on the west by Interstate 71, and on the east by Linwood Avenue.

According to the 1990 Census, approximately 1,011 people live in the South of Main Reinvestment Area. The population distribution shows it to be predominantly African American at 85%, with approximately 10% of the area white. Average household income in the reinvestment area is \$16,302, nearly half the city-wide average of \$31,860. Over one-half of the approximately 583 housing units in the South of Main Reinvestment Area were built before 1939. And, of the total number of housing units, approximately 16% are owner occupied and 60% are renter occupied. This is lower than the city averages of 03% owner-occupied and 09% renter occupied.

As a smaller portion of the Near East Side, the reinvestment area, along with its other Near East neighbors, has contributed much to the cultural, civic, and commercial development of Columbus. There are many fine examples of Victorian and American Four Square architecture in the area. Although many of these homes have fallen into disrepair, there are others that have been proudly maintained by long-time residents, as well as houses undergoing renovations by those recently attracted to the community.

Running through the reinvestment area is Main Street, a commercial corridor which at the turn of the century was part of a thriving central business district. Radiating outward from the intersection of Broad and High Streets, Main Street, along with Bryden Road and Long Street, enjoyed great prosperity.

As is the case with many older city commercial corridors, Main Street was heavily affected by the mobility afforded by automobiles and the development of new suburban-style shopping areas. The Near East side neighborhoods and commercial corridors suffered again when the construction of I-70 and I-71, disrupted east and west traffic flow and razed buildings to accommodate the interstates.

Many organizations and individuals are using their time, ideas, and talent to revitalize commercial and residential properties in the reinvestment area, as well as make quality of life improvements and open new opportunities for area residents: decorative street lights have been installed on

Main Street; new homeowners are purchasing and rehabilitating homes; multi-family homes are being rehabilitated and made safe and affordable; new trees have been planted on Linwood Avenue; neighbors are meeting one another, organizing and building relationships with other organizations; a neighborhood clean up day was held; neighbors are helping out at Ohio Avenue School where a new play ground was installed; and a summer day program was created for neighborhood children.

There is still much to be done and community members gave their time and energy to the reinvestment workshops. The activities prioritized by participants in this report will require the ongoing commitment of residents, community organizations, businesses, and city officials and staff, supplemented by city-wide organizations, if they are to become a reality. The “Main Choices” have been made.

COLUMBUS COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT AREAS

1994 - 1996

Announced in the Fall of 1993, the Community Reinvestment Program signaled a new approach to community reinvestment efforts in Columbus. It started as a pilot program with six of Columbus's central city neighborhoods. Initiated by the Development Department, the program is different from earlier revitalization efforts. Instead of focusing on single issues, problems, or programs, the city has forged partnerships with neighborhood residents and stakeholders to develop long-range plans that communicate each neighborhood's goals and priority activities for getting things done.

NEIGHBORHOOD REINVESTMENT: THE HOLISTIC APPROACH

The Community Reinvestment Program is one of the city's responses to recommendations made by a Low-Income Neighborhood Advisory Panel of The Urban Land Institute (ULI). In March 1992, the ULI Panel visited Columbus to examine our local situation and offer recommendations to improve the delivery of housing and neighborhood revitalization.

Sponsored by the local ULI Chapter and various business and development interests, the Panel examined background information, toured three study neighborhoods, and interviewed over 100 representatives of Columbus neighborhoods, financial institutions, development organizations and city government. The Panel concluded its public inquiry with a presentation of its findings. These recommendations included a statement on the need to clarify public policies addressing affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization.

The Panel also advised that neighborhood revitalization activities be based on comprehensive, holistic, neighborhood plans. The plans should include a definition of neighborhood boundaries that work, thus enabling resources to be concentrated in an area small enough to make an impact, yet large enough to be significant. Overall two things were stressed: to meaningfully have an impact, revitalization efforts must provide for resident and stakeholder participation at every step of the process, and be able to build upon an area's strengths and successes.

NEIGHBORHOOD PLANNING

Rather than trying to "fit" neighborhoods into particular city programs, the reinvestment plans, goals, and implementation strategies will be tailored to reflect each area's priorities and community vision. This reflects a "bottom-up," rather than "top-down," approach to neighborhood revitalization efforts.

As mentioned earlier, area residents and stakeholders will direct city activities in their neighborhoods and be responsible for negotiating agreed upon community goals and action strategies. It is likely that new ideas will emerge during the planning process; if they are to become a reality, new partnerships will need to be forged. The city will make a three year commitment of staff and resources to each of the community reinvestment areas. However, successful revitalization efforts will need a variety of planning and implementing partnerships involving the public, private, and nonprofit sectors, and most importantly, area residents.

REINVESTMENT AREAS AND NEIGHBORHOOD REVITALIZATION POLICY

In response to the ULI challenge to clarify the city's affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization policies, Mayor Gregory S. Lashutka convened the Housing and Neighborhood Development Committee (HNDC) in March 1993. Comprised of city officials, neighborhood leaders, community service providers, and representatives of the development community, this group drafted policies and strategies reflective of all housing and neighborhood interests. The policies will serve as the city's statement on the delivery of housing assistance and the revitalization of Columbus neighborhoods.

Additionally, the HNDC developed reinvestment area selection criteria. The criteria contain several broad themes, as follows: residential and stakeholder involvement, community based

planning, holistic programs, small areas to maximize impact, and signs of decay and distress. The committee also advised that the city give priority consideration to areas that have a history and a culture—that were once vital, and are now demonstrating the desire to regain their earlier vitality.

The six reinvestment areas were selected using this criteria. Most of the reinvestment areas are smaller sub-neighborhoods of existing community planning areas. They are referred to here as South of Main, Hilltop I & II, Windsor Terrace, Southwood, and Italian Village.

Each of the reinvestment areas have at least one “solid” border to build from. In some instances, the border is an interstate highway or industrial location that separates the neighborhood from other areas of decay and distress. In others, a stable neighborhood serves as the base from which to address revitalization activities. Other common strengths include active development organizations, other development activity underway that the program can build upon, strong resident participation and organization, affordable housing stock, and committed local institutions.

Planning and implementation activities have begun simultaneously in the 1990 designated reinvestment areas of South of Main and Hilltop. Hilltop I & II have been combined for planning purposes and some implementation activities will be staged to occur in 1990, while other activities will take place in 1996. The annual designations correlate with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) yearly funding cycles.

Planning activities will precede the expenditure of CDBG funds set aside for reinvestment activities. Upon completion of the Hilltop and South of Main planning efforts, the remaining reinvestment areas will be phased in one at a time, as each preceding area completes a six month planning process.

The Development Department’s Planning Division will lead the planning phase in partnership with the Neighborhood Development Division. The Neighborhood Development Division will coordinate and lead the three-year implementation phase of each of the reinvestment area plans.

SOUTH OF MAIN: A VERY HUMAN HISTORY

The city of Columbus, which was originally laid out in 1812 by Joel Wright, enjoyed unprecedented growth during the aftermath of the Civil War. This was especially true along some of the major thoroughfares such as Broad and Long streets. History has shown that development flourishes in areas that provide easy access for transportation. Main street was one such area.

South of Main is part of a national corridor. Formerly known as Friend Street, Main Street became part of an effort to connect the east and west coasts of the United States. In the 1820's, a road dubbed National Trail was initiated in Baltimore, Maryland. It eventually traversed the Cumberland Gap, Pennsylvania, and all parallel states. Its final destination was San Francisco. Elevated stone markers placed along the trail informed travelers of the distance they had covered.

Because at one time Main Street was the Ohio portion of this trail, all traffic going east and west utilized Main. It was only natural then, that it developed into a business corridor. In later years Main Street (Route 00), as a national connection was replaced by Interstate 70.

Originally, the residential area adjacent to Main street was farmland. For example, the land between Kimball and Linwood was part of the farm owned by Mr. Kimball who was highly active in the Underground Railroad. Kimball Avenue was originally the lane that led to his house. Some semblance of these former farm tracts can be seen in the layout of the Highway Patrol (formerly School for the Blind) at the corner of Main and Parsons.

The change from farmhouse to subdivision began in the 1870's. Some existing houses on Main street were built at that time, however many have been gutted and masked by storefronts. A careful examination of some existing commercial properties on Main between Parsons Avenue and Nelson Road still reveals the vestiges of some once very nice homes.

The construction of infill housing was gradual. During that era, people often lived near their place of employment. Neighborhoods were self-sufficient entities supported by clusters of businesses, goods, and services that met the economic needs of the area residents.

South of Main was no exception. There were drugstores on the northwest corner of 18th and Main, Ohio and Main, Main and Champion, and the southwest corner of Wilson and Main. There were eight confectioneries, seven general stores, shoe repair, etc. Later, there were supermarkets on the corner of Mound and Kimball, Wilson and Main, and Fulton and Gilbert.

Firehouses and schools are a benchmark of neighborhood development. Firehouse Number 11 at 1000 E. Main and the Main Street school constructed during the later part of the nineteenth century attest to the development of the neighborhood.

There was a high ethnic mixture of Dutch, Germans, Quakers, Jews, and African Americans. One of Columbus' outstanding attorneys, Richard Heer Oman was born and reared on Linwood Avenue. His specialty was not-for-profit organizations and special funding for communities.

The First English Lutheran Church at the corner of 22nd and Main, is one of the oldest in the area. Though the parishioners were primarily Dutch, they freely canvassed the area inviting all to Sunday school and worship.

In the 1970's, Rev. Barnhardt of the Lutheran church saw the need for a grass roots organization to revitalize the neighborhood concept of the past. He solicited suggestions for names and one entered by longtime resident Mrs. Annie Mallory was selected — East Central Citizens Organization (ECCO). ECCO was to help people help themselves as they had done in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. An excerpt from the minutes of one of the ECCO meetings taken from the archives of Mrs. Mallory, indicates that ECCO enjoyed national and international notoriety:

"Wednesday, 06 October 1971

Ms. Holman and Mr. Martinelli, our visitors from Milwaukee, came in at 2:30 P.M. We discussed ECCO, then they were shown the business places by Mrs. Rebecca Jackson. Ms. Holman and Mr. Martinelli kept repeating how impressed they were by the way the people of ECCO participated in all the programs. They were completely overwhelmed by all they saw and heard while visiting ECCO."

"Wednesday, 27 October 1971

9:30 A.M. Twelve ladies from South America sponsored by the League of Women Voters, visited ECCO...had coffee and toast then visited the classrooms—up to the Director's office for briefing on ECCO—Pictures and write-up by Mr. Emmitt Crawly of Model Cities. Mr. Raymond Lowery and Mr. Rufus Linville talked to the ladies— walking tour of the businesses, YCC and Rehab and Training— The Director's home for brief visit and cider—picked up in Rehab's Bus (by Mr. Linville) driven to the ECCO IGA Supermarket at 18th and Oak—passed the town house project on Rich Street- back to ECCO for lunch in the lounge. Tables beautifully set up by Mrs. Florence Howard. The ladies were very impressed with the overall picture of ECCO and its components. Surprised at jobs done by area people. It was a truly enjoyable day for all concerned.—Parting a bit sad thinking that in all probability we would never meet again. Ladies from: Chile, Venezuela, Argentina, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Mexico, and Guatemala."

South of Main holds many fond memories for resident Elizabeth Whitehead whose grandmother was one of the first African Americans on Linwood Avenue. She remembers the skating rink, and Dr. Ziskind's office at Main and Linwood and that CMAAO was started in a home on Mound Street.

Amanda Maxwell remembers the Saturday afternoons at the Eastern Movie Theater on Main.

With the advent of the automobile, some Eastside residents turned to outlying areas of Columbus. The turmoil of the sixties and seventies greatly accelerated this movement.

There were, however, residents who remained resolute that South of Main was their home. They have given us a picture of the area in more prosperous times. Mrs. Annie Mallory stated that when she was searching for a new home, she selected South of Main over several other neighborhoods because it was pretty and the people were so nice. History does repeat itself. The Community Reinvestment movement is a sign that it can be that way again.

SOURCES

Prepared by Kathleen Bailey, April 21, 1990.

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Annie and Prince Mallory, Amanda Maxwell, and Elizabeth Whitehead.

Special thanks to Eldon Ward.

GETTING STARTED IN SOUTH OF MAIN

The planning program for the community reinvestment areas has been designed to encourage resident and stakeholder participation in decision making that will affect their neighborhood. Community members are encouraged to take a good look at their neighborhood and then identify activities that will bring about desired changes. It is a goal of this process to build confidence that citizens can make happen, what they've planned to have happen.

To get things started in the South of Main planning area, a preliminary community meeting was held with local leaders, including members of civic groups, the Near East Area Commission, business organizations, churches, social service providers, and the schools. The meeting was called to take care of "nuts and bolts" issues, such as where and when to hold the workshops, as well as to decide the best way to inform the community about the program.

Several smaller working committees were established and members of the organizational committee met November through January to prepare for the workshops. A theme was created, "THE MAIN CHOICE" and members of the organizational committee worked hard to get the word out to planning area residents, property owners, and businesses. Posters were created, handbills distributed, and letters mailed to area property owners.

To get the planning process under way, a series of three Saturday workshops, one per month, was scheduled to take place at the Ohio Avenue Elementary School. Each workshop focused on a specific topic. At the first workshop, participants were asked to identify the priority concerns and issues in their neighborhood. The second workshop provided an opportunity to better define and clarify these issues and focus on resources available to help formulate solutions. In addition, smaller task force groups were also created, so that community members could continue their work and develop activities for consideration by all participants at the third workshop. At the third and final workshop, task force reports were made and participants voted to rank, in order of highest priority, the activities listed.

A youth subcommittee was also established as part of the organizational process. Individuals aged 10 to 19, account for approximately 37% of the population in the South of Main reinvestment area. As an integral part of our communities, youth need to be included in community reinvestment efforts.

It was decided to ask area youth about their interests during the annual Christmas banquet at the Blackburn Recreation Center. Based on the ideas and activities identified at the banquet, a "Youth Information Exchange" was held on February 20th at the Blackburn Recreation Center. The exchange attracted over 60 youth participants and 20 agency representatives. Youth were able to talk with individuals representing various neighborhood and city-wide organizations with expertise in the areas of career development, neighborhood improvement, self-enhancement, and recreation.

During the exchange, a youth survey was conducted. The survey asked what youth liked most and least about their neighborhood, how safe they felt and what they would do to improve the South of Main area. Twenty-seven surveys were completed by young people of a variety of ages.

Overwhelmingly they responded that Blackburn Recreation Center was their favorite place in the neighborhood. The things that they liked least about the neighborhood related to drugs, people hanging around on street corners, and guns. One-third of those responding felt that the neighborhood was fairly unsafe to dangerous.

To improve neighborhood safety, youth strongly felt that guns should be taken off the streets and that shootings should be stopped. They also felt that stopping drug dealers from selling drugs in their neighborhood would make the neighborhood safer. If elected Mayor of Columbus, the youth felt that they would improve the South of Main neighborhood by getting drugs off the streets,

hiring people to clean the neighborhood, increasing the number of playgrounds for younger kids, and providing shelter for the homeless.

Following the “Information Exchange,” workshop participants enjoyed Pizza donated by Donatos and Society Bank and soda compliments of the Coca-Cola Bottling Co. of Northern Ohio. It is fully anticipated that community youth will have the opportunity to design and execute neighborhood improvement activities, during the three year implementation phase.

What follows is a summary of the South of Main workshops.

WORKSHOP 1: ISSUES AND ASSETS

The first workshop was organized into a series of discussion groups of eight to ten people. Each group had a city staff person serving as a facilitator. The facilitator’s role was to ensure that everyone had an opportunity to share their ideas and then record those ideas.

Discussion centered around two questions that were used to identify neighborhood strengths and problems. The questions were as follows:

1. What do you like about your neighborhood and want to keep?
2. What don’t you like about your neighborhood and want to change?

Participants responded to the above questions in two separate discussion rounds. At the end of the second round, each table reported their responses back to the full group. The responses were recorded and after all of the reports were made, participants ranked the issues to indicate what they felt were the highest priority concerns of the neighborhood.

Three task force groups were created at the end of the meeting. The first group was charged with exploring and reporting on the neighborhood’s past and recent history. The second group served as the workshop “memory,” summarizing the issues reported and the results of the priority vote. And last, a housing rehabilitation group was formed to discuss residential rehabilitation needs and available programs.

● What Happened in South of Main...

It took two tries to get the first South of Main workshop underway. The first workshop was canceled due to sub-zero temperatures on what turned out to be the coldest weekend of the winter. Despite the bad weather, over thirty people showed up at the Ohio Avenue School, ready to go.

With the weather’s full cooperation, over sixty community members turned out on March 19th to start the workshops. The meeting began with an overview of the reinvestment area program, its goals, and objectives. This was followed by a question and discussion session about the program and what it might mean to the South of Main area. Participants reviewed the proposed program boundaries and although there was some discussion about expanding them, there were no changes.

The workshop then broke up into small discussion groups with individuals talking about what they did and did not like about their neighborhood. Participants had no difficulty identifying what they liked about the South of Main area. They felt very positive about the racial, cultural, and economic diversity present in the neighborhood. In addition they felt that this was a community with a great deal of awareness, friendly neighbors, and a history of social action, as evidenced by the number of community-based organizations.

The historical significance of the Near East side was also a source of pride, as was the architectural character and relative affordability of its housing stock. Participants identified the convenience of the neighborhood as yet another asset, citing its proximity to downtown and easy access to social service programs. The mix of area land uses, primarily residential and commercial, was also seen as a benefit.

When discussing things that they didn't like and wanted to see changed about their neighborhood, neglected properties, safety issues, and the need for "nice" affordable housing topped the list. Poorly maintained and/or vacant commercial and residential properties emerged as the number one issue.

Participants were concerned about the health and safety issues associated with these buildings, as well as their blighting impact on the rest of the community. They felt that city Code Enforcement has not adequately addressed these properties, particularly those that have been vacant for a number of years. In order to encourage property maintenance and improvements, participants felt that the city should make low interest loans available to residential and commercial property owners. It was felt that absentee landowners in particular, have failed to maintain their property in a reasonable manner.

Crime and safety-related issues were also cited, with participants expressing concern about crack houses locating in the neighborhood, as well as an increase in "obvious" street crime and other types of illicit activity. The presence of crack houses and related criminal activities, makes many residents feel unsafe.

Concerns were expressed about the commitment to job training programs in the area and the general efforts being made to hire community residents to fill job openings. This issue was underscored by a related concern expressed about the area's high unemployment and incarceration rates.

After all the group reports were made, participants voted with "dots" to identify their priority concerns and a task force group was formed to summarize voting results. At the meetings conclusion, a light lunch was provided, compliments of the Urban Bankers Group, a consortium of twelve Columbus lending institutions.

WORKSHOP 2: PROBLEM DEFINITION AND IDENTIFYING RESOURCES

The second workshop focused on producing a detailed definition of the problems previously identified, so that potential solutions could be developed. Attention was also given to the range of resources available to lead the group toward feasible and realistic solutions. Task force reports that outlined neighborhood history, discussed housing rehabilitation needs, and summarized the proceedings of the first workshop, were the first order of business.

After the reports were made, participants were asked to sit in small discussion groups, but this time they were able to pick their group based on the issues they wanted to talk about. Assisting each group was a facilitator and resource leader (business person, city official, social service, or organizational representative). The resource leader was asked to use their expertise to help residents identify in a detailed way, the problem and who they should get to help with possible solutions. Problem definition and ideas were generated around the following:

- What is our goal?
- What is the problem?
- Who is doing something now?
- What can be done that has not been done before?
- Who can help that is not helping now?

At the end of the meeting, new task forces were formed to continue the work of the discussion groups. They gathered additional information about the problem, met with resource people to get their ideas and help, and developed activities and implementation responsibilities.

• What Happened in South of Main...

The second workshop was held on March 19th at the Ohio Avenue School. Once again, there was a large turnout of community members, with over 50 people participating in workshop discussions.

The meeting started with a special announcement by community members working to establish a neighborhood block watch. Participants were provided information on the meeting time, place, and date by South of Main resident, Ray Crislip. A report was also made to participants concerning an economic development discussion that took place on March 15th.

Following the February 19th workshop, it was learned that there was some interest in meeting before the second workshop to begin discussing economic development concerns. A mailing list was generated to notify community members of the meeting, using the sign in sheets from the first workshop.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide an opportunity for interested workshop participants to start discussing economic development issues. The subsequent discussion, touched on the benefits of pooling resources, improving linkages between community organizations, and the need to establish a strong community relationship with lenders.

After a report on the economic development discussion was made, Jim Hammonds, South of Main Development Corporation, discussed what took place at the first meeting. Jim provided an overview on how the summary task force group organized the items identified as problems at the first workshop, into eight categories. The categories were used to organize the discussion groups as follows: Neglected Property and Code Enforcement; Family Services, Youth and Recreation; Employment and Job Training; Commercial Support and Development; Safety; Housing Development and Rehabilitation; Neighborhood Improvement; and Community Empowerment.

Kathleen Bailey, South of Main resident, wrapped up the Summary Task Force report. Kathleen urged participants to stay focused on the issues at hand, but take a positive and holistic approach when thinking about potential resources and solutions.

Following a short break, participants selected discussion groups, based on their personal interests. Individuals were able to join more than one group and by the end of the workshop the walls were lined with easel paper, showing each group's progress. Participants were encouraged to review each group's work and add additional ideas, and sign up for smaller task force groups. For many, the group discussions continued through the lunch provided by the Urban Bankers' Group.

WORKSHOP 3: PLANNING FOR ACTION

The third workshop was organized to identify priority activities and establish an agenda for action. Task force groups presented summaries of their work. Based on these reports, participants were asked to rank in order of highest priority, the activities they felt would best improve their neighborhood. The results of the task force groups and prioritized activities formed the basis of the neighborhood's action plan. The action plan will guide the implementation efforts in the reinvestment area by directing allocation decisions and the delivery of city services.

- **What Happened in South of Main...**

The final South of Main workshop was held on April 23rd at the Ohio Avenue School. The meeting began with participants taking some time to review reports prepared by each of the eight task forces. The reports contained potential activities to address problems identified in earlier workshops and task force meetings.

Over 40 people were present to hear about each task force groups recommendations. One city staff person was assigned to each task force group, with additional staff assisting with issue specific concerns. Community members presented summaries on each of their task force group's findings.

Spirited discussions took place as participants sought to understand and clarify the recommended activities. After a lengthy session, the report and discussion phase of the workshop ended. The meeting concluded with participants once again casting “dot votes” to indicate their priority activities—and then sitting down to a well deserved lunch. During the workshop, special announcements of upcoming events and community issues were made.

PLAN SUMMARY

SAFETY

The goal of the Safety Task Force is “to create a safe neighborhood and pride in residence among neighbors.” Safety-related issues were a primary concern of workshop participants, as was further evidenced by concurrent efforts on the part of residents to start a neighborhood block watch.

Members of the South of Main community are actively seeking effective and positive ways to eliminate criminal activity from their neighborhood. Participants were particularly concerned with crack houses, illegal drug activity, obvious street crime and other illicit activities.

Of particular concern is a perceived increase in the occurrence of blatantly illegal activities, committed in full view of the neighborhood. Residents are concerned that those engaged in illegal activities are feeling more, rather than less, comfortable committing crimes in the area.

Participants felt that the high number of vacant lots and buildings in the neighborhood have fueled crime problems because they provide opportunity and are, by and large, unwatched. In addition, they felt that police response times need to be improved and that officers can do more to address obvious street crimes.

The Safety Task Force Group met with representatives from the Columbus Police Narcotics and Community Education Divisions, their local precinct, and the city’s Anti-Crime and Violence Coordinator. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss community concerns and develop solution activities.

At the final workshop, participants voted to make their highest priority the implementation of two safety-related activities. Receiving an equal number of votes, these activities address street crime in general, and narcotics trafficking in particular.

Participants want to see the area targeted for a special Narcotics Bureau and Patrol Bureau model project to eliminate crack houses and street crime. Its success will depend on regular communication between residents, area organizations, and the Police Division. It will also make active use of asset forfeiture laws to make examples of the most blatant criminal cases.

The second activity involves the use of code enforcement and nuisance abatement actions to close down crack houses. The implementation of this activity will depend on the outcome of a pending court action. However, if upheld in court, this action could prove quite useful where there is a history of criminal activity, evidence of current criminal activity, and proper notice has been served to the property owner.

Residents, alert to a growing indifference on the part of those committing crimes, are ready to work with each other, community organizations, and the police, to make it very uncomfortable for anyone to commit crimes in the South of Main area.

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT

The goal of the Neighborhood Improvement Task Force Group is “to provide adequate public services and facilities for the South of Main neighborhood.” At earlier workshops, participants identified a range of activities that they felt needed the attention of the appropriate city department and/or division. By and large, the issues fell under the categories of refuse, alley conditions, street lighting, and communication.

Large quantities of litter and trash are accumulating around homes, on vacant lots, and in the streets and alleys. On the surface, it appears that these problems are caused by inadequate refuse collection; however, the issues are more complex. Illegal dumping into the 300-gallon trash containers has caused the containers to over flow. The trash and garbage has attracted rodents

and unwanted stray cats and dogs to the area. There also appears to be a lot of confusion by residents over the correct collection day.

There is also a perception in the reinvestment area that bulk collection services are inadequate. Items set out for bulk pick-up are not collected on a regular basis. This has resulted in an unkempt appearance throughout the neighborhood; there is a need for more frequent bulk pick-up.

It was strongly felt that the alleys in the South of Main area are in very poor condition. They contain pot holes that retain water for a long period of time. Many of the alleys used to be privately held and are much narrower than the 20 feet right of way required by code. Trash and other trucks have difficulty maneuvering in the limited right of way causing further damage.

Concern was also expressed over the current level of street lighting in the reinvestment area. It was felt that the present level of lighting is inadequate and needs to be increased. Better lighting of the alleys and residential streets is seen as an important deterrent to crime. In addition to increasing the number and efficiency of street lights in the neighborhood, adequate maintenance of existing street lights was also identified as a problem.

Participants also felt that there is a lack of communication between neighborhood residents and city officials. The perception is that city employees need to be more sensitive to resident complaints and needs. It was felt that there is a lack of follow through by city employees and no system to direct residents to appropriate city resources and services.

Upon reviewing the proposed Neighborhood Improvement activities at the final workshop, participants gave highest priority to activities that would upgrade and repair their alleys, thus eliminating drainage and pot hole problems. Further, priority was given to evaluating the feasibility of vacating those alleys that do not meet the code requirement of 20 feet right-of-way. Participants also made a priority, activities to improve street lighting and using vacant lots for community gardening and composting.

NEGLECTED AND ABANDONED PROPERTY/CODE ENFORCEMENT

Although code enforcement is the responsibility of the city, this category was felt to be important and specialized enough to warrant its own task force group. This task force set as its goal, "to improve the physical conditions of properties in the South of Main area using a partnership between the city and the residents of South of Main.

There are a number of chronically neglected and/or abandoned properties in the South of Main area that detract from the rest of the neighborhood. These properties affect the health, safety and property of the entire community.

It was also felt that there is poor communication between the community and Regulations Division's Code Enforcement Section. This results in a lack of understanding of code enforcement policies and procedures. Both cause frustration on the part of the community and the regulations staff, resulting in what was termed the, "I called and reported the problem and nothing has happened" condition.

The top-ranked implementation activity in this category was also a priority leader overall. Participants strongly supported the activity in which the city's Code Enforcement Section will issue appropriate paint-up and fix-up orders, to owners of unoccupied properties currently in violation of Columbus City Codes. Working together, members of the task force group and the Regulations staff, set a May 25th target date for completing this activity.

There was also a commitment made to increase communication between Regulations staff and the community. This activity has already started, with a community member acting as a liaison. The Code Enforcement task force group has been absorbed into the newly formed Neighborhood

Safety Restoration Alliance (NSRA). The NSRA was formed by South of Main residents following the community reinvestment workshops and has absorbed a number of the task force groups.

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

The Community Empowerment Task Force Group chose as their goal, “for the South of Main area to be a strong, united and aware community where its community spirit is nurtured and regenerated through the cultivation of its residents.”

The task force focused its attention on three issues that were raised at the first workshop. First, that there isn't any network in place linking community-based organizations. It was felt that the focus of individual organizations is often narrow in scope and that information does not reach the “broader” community. In addition, opportunities to share organizational and community resources are presently under utilized.

The second problem the group considered was that area residents lack information about the full range of programs, services, and organizations operating in the community. Further, that information needs to be in as many different formats as possible, i.e. print, radio, television, public service announcements, etc. so that it will be accessible to individuals of all reading levels.

The third issue addressed how difficult it is to organize and to sustain, organizational momentum. It was felt that empowerment needs to go beyond information sharing. Attention also needs to be given to activities that create excitement and momentum in the community that can be self-sustaining.

The idea to create a community-based Neighborhood Round Table received strong support from participants at the last workshop. As conceived by the task force, the round table would be comprised of organizational and community representatives. The purpose would be to look at issues that build community by concerning itself with long term expectations and goals. The round table would act as a bridge between organizations and residents by containing elements from all of the resources existing in the South of Main community.

A second empowerment activity receiving workshop support was the idea to use the Neighborhood Round Table to generate and sustain community-wide excitement and momentum. This would be accomplished by using the round table as a way for community organizations and residents to network with each other, as well as serve as a clearing house for sharing ideas and resources.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT & REHABILITATION

The reinvestment area, situated immediately to the east of downtown and to the south of Main Street, is located within the historic Near East area and is part of the Olde Towne East Neighborhood Association. It is predominantly a neighborhood of generously sized brick and frame, Four Square and Victorian Homes. The relative affordability of the housing stock, low property taxes, proximity to downtown and access to the city's network of interstates, are just a few of the benefits to be found in this community.

Despite these advantages, there are several critical issues facing this community. Often many of the same factors that aid households in becoming homeowners, (affordability and low property taxes) also make it economically feasible for some individuals to stop investing in their property altogether, leaving it in very poor condition and/or vacant. Property that is left vacant or uncared for fuels the perception of neighborhood decline and makes it difficult to encourage private investment and new construction.

Several activities have been identified by participants that they feel will positively impact the community. The activities focus on providing low-interest loans for home owners, developers and investors that will encourage residential and commercial improvements; setting aside grants targeted to assist senior citizens, the handicapped and those on fixed incomes; developing an acquisition/rehabilitation program; supporting homeownership; cleaning up vacant lots and

returning them to productive use (side yards, pocket parks, community gardens, infill, etc.); and ensuring quality rehabilitation work.

FAMILY SERVICES, YOUTH AND RECREATION

The goal of the Family Services, Youth and Recreation Task Force is “to enhance the environment in the South of Main neighborhood for families and youth by providing organized activities and an opportunity to participate in those activities.”

Workshop participants felt it important to have a variety of organized activities available to area youth and their families. Community organizations, businesses, residents, and city officials need to work together to develop a variety of organized activities and opportunities. Activities should provide a positive outlet for youthful energy and be supportive of families. Development of these activities was also seen as a good way to reduce crime and violence in the neighborhood, along with substance abuse and gang activity.

It was noted that participation levels for community programs currently in existence are relatively low. This may be the case because community members are not fully aware of the different types of programs and resources available to them. To help get the information out, the task force recommended using one common newsletter that would list all community programs, contact persons, and any other pertinent information.

Blackburn Recreation Center was viewed as an important community asset. It was felt that the Center is under staffed, particularly during peak times. In addition, there was concern that the 25 cent fee for the Recreation Center’s swimming pool, is too expensive for some area children, especially those from larger families. The community is interested in setting up a program that would allow area youth to do neighborhood work in exchange for entrance to the swimming pool. They would also like to see some ball diamonds built in the area, so that little league baseball and softball leagues could be formed.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

This task force set as its goal, “to support and attract business services which support the needs of area residents and contribute to the visual quality of the neighborhood.” It was felt that business retention and expansion is not supported by financial institutions and that there is no coordination between what is needed in the community and what opportunities are available.

Task force members felt that a comprehensive market analysis and a three to five year economic development plan would benefit both the community and the financial institutions. The group proposed that a neighborhood council be developed that would market the neighborhood as its primary responsibility. It was also suggested that the community investigate and/or devise a joint resident and business initiative that would have a cooperative-type of structure.

EMPLOYMENT AND JOB TRAINING

The goal of the Employment and Job Training Task Force is “to foster job creation, entrepreneurial opportunity, and revitalization of the neighborhood, by residents of the neighborhood.” To realize this goal, the task force advocates linking job creation and entrepreneurial opportunity together to create a common goal of economic revitalization in the community.

To be more specific, There are many small businesses in the South of Main area that have the potential to create jobs for local residents. The community resources that are available, such as the Urban League, Redwood Development Corporation, and Teams 2000, can facilitate training programs for residents and assist in providing incentives for small businesses.

PLANS FOR ACTION

SAFETY

- **Problem**

Participants have observed an increase in the number and severity of criminal acts being committed in the South of Main area. Persons engaged in street crime and other illegal activities due so with little regard for who may be present or watching, such as police, children, residents, etc. There are crack houses operating in the neighborhood which adds to community safety concerns. Participants would like to see more police protection and better response times. Vacant, abandoned lots and structures are a major safety problem because they are largely unwatched and provide plenty of opportunity to those wishing to commit crimes.

- **Priority Activities**

√√ Activity: **Target reinvestment area for a special Narcotics Bureau and Patrol Bureau model project to eliminate crack houses and street crime.** Ongoing communications should be established between a reinvestment area safety task force and the Division of Police to report and follow up on progress of the model project. Police Division representatives should be invited to area town meetings regularly to get all players at the table with residents and Main Street Business Association, to develop tactics and assign responsibilities. The asset forfeiture statutes should be used to make examples of most blatant cases.

Activity Leader: **Reinvestment Area Safety Task Force, Narcotics Bureau and Patrol Bureau, and Main Street Business Association.**

√√ Activity: **Close down drug houses through the use of code enforcement and nuisance abatement actions.** The use of nuisance abatement is currently being hampered by a "Judge Tyack" decision. If the appeal is won, this form of civil action can result in the closing of a drug house for one year. This action can be effective where there is a history of illegal activity, evidence of current illegal activity, and proper notice to the property owner.

Activity Leader: To be determined pending the outcome of appeal.

- **Additional Activities**

√ Activity: Continue to feed information to Narcotics Bureau and Patrol Bureau concerning drug crime in the neighborhood. This will enable the police to prioritize their operations and eliminate the hot spots in the reinvestment area. The neighborhood should be organized into a more systematic, citizen-reporting network. A special effort should be made to recruit renters into the reporting network.

Activity Leader: **Residents Reinvestment Area Safety Task Force, Community Education Officer, and Columbus Police Division.**

√ Activity: **Create a Crime Prevention Resource Center in the reinvestment area.** The center could be mainly staffed with VISTA and resident volunteers. The center's program should include: distribution of crime prevention information, education programs, violence prevention training for area youth and young adults, victim's assistance, and special services as needed based upon neighborhood input.

Activity Leader: **Reinvestment Area Safety Task Force, community residents, VISTA volunteers, and Columbus Police Division.**

√ Activity: **Develop grant funds to purchase special off-duty police services and to form a citizen patrol program.** Resident perceptions are that more police presence in the neighborhood would deter crime. Because of demands on available manpower, the Patrol Bureau cannot commit significant additional resources. However, 12 Precinct would like to be contacted directly with feed back concerning response times. The precinct sergeant is available for meetings with residents to resolve any problems. A combination of citizen patrols with more systematic reporting of crime and off-duty police with arrest powers are recommended.

Activity Leader: **To be determined.**

√ Activity: **Conduct a major effort to clean up the physical environment through the Glad-Bag-athon and other regularly scheduled events throughout the summer.** The clean up events should be coordinated with Refuse Collection, the Main Street Business Association, and other reinvestment area organizations. In addition, area residents should meet with the Main Street Business Association to resolve apparent differences in perception of responsibilities.

Activity Leader: **Resident Coordinating Council, Main Street Business Association, and Columbus Refuse Division.**

NEIGHBORHOOD IMPROVEMENT

- **Problem**

The alleys are in poor condition. They are full of holes and water collects after rains and it pools. In addition the alleys are poorly lighted, dirt and trash collects in them, and overhanging tree branches hide criminal activity. There are not enough street lights in the neighborhood and many of the street lights in place are poorly maintained. Trash collects around the 300 gallon trash containers, as well as on vacant lots and in the streets and alleys. Residents are often confused about trash pick days and bulk pick up response times are too slow. In addition, there is a serious problem with illegal dumping in the large trash containers and on vacant lots. Participants would like to see better communication between city officials and staff and neighborhood residents.

- **Priority Activities**

√√ Activity: **Upgrade, repair and/or resurface alleys to eliminate drainage and pot hole problems.** An extensive survey of the alleys should be conducted to determine the extent of the problems. Based on this survey, an improvement plan should be developed that addresses pavement surfaces and maintenance issues. Underground utility improvements should be accomplished prior to improvements to the alleys.

Activity Leader: **Columbus Engineering and Construction Division and Columbus Public Utilities Department.**

√√ Activity: **Use vacant lots for community gardening and composting.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus and community residents.**

√√ Activity: **Evaluate vacating those alleys that do not meet the code requirement of 20 feet of right of way.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Traffic Engineering and Parking Division.**

√√ Activity: **Install street lighting to improve safety and deter criminal activity in the neighborhood.** Specifically, additional lighting is needed along Main Street west of Ohio Avenue and in the alleys.

Activity Leader: **Columbus Electricity Division.**

- **Additional Activities**

√ Activity: **Assist residents with sensor lighting on front and back of homes.**

Activity Leader: **Light Up the Night Association (LUNA).**

√ Activity: **Mark trash containers with the standard color code that represents the correct pick-up day.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Refuse Division.**

√ Activity: **Encourage residents of the reinvestment area to report the misuse of the 300 gallon trash containers by private haulers and people from outside the area.** Residents should report all problems immediately, and not delay in calling the Refuse Collection Division.

Activity Leader: **Neighborhood Organizations, Columbus Refuse Division, and community residents.**

√ Activity: **Pick up garbage that falls from mechanized trash dumpster.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Refuse Division.**

√ Activity: **Trim the trees that are hanging over the alleys.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Recreation and Parks Department, Columbus Southern Power, and community residents.**

√ Activity: **Properly maintain the street lighting located in the reinvestment area.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Electricity Division.**

√ Activity: **Evaluate the current methods of refuse collection and establish a bulk pick-up system that addresses chronic problem areas.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Refuse Division.**

√ Activity: **Correctly publicize the regularly scheduled trash pick-up day.** Print and electronic (GTC-3) media should be used to get the word out.

Activity Leader: **Columbus Refuse Division.**

√ Activity: **Conduct a very intensive neighborhood clean up program.** This effort should be organized and managed by the residents of the community. It should be coordinated with the Refuse Collection Division and utilize city of Columbus and/or private collection resources.

Activity Leader: **Community residents and Columbus Refuse Division.**

√ Activity: **Conduct neighborhood clean-up, fix-up, paint-up weekend on a regular basis.** This event should be planned, organized, and implemented by residents. Bulk trash pickup could be included in this effort.

Activity Leader: **Community residents, neighborhood organizations, area business leaders, Columbus Refuse Division, and Columbus Neighborhood Development Division (Mobile Tool Units).**

√ Activity: **Reposition the 300 gallon trash containers to locations that better serve the reinvestment area.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Refuse Division.**

√ Activity: **Re-evaluate using 90 gallon trash containers as an alternative to 300 gallon trash containers in the alleys.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Refuse Division.**

√ Activity: **Increase resident pride in the neighborhood.**

Activity Leader: **Community organizations, area business leaders, and community residents.**

√ Activity: **Encourage residents to call the Refuse Collection Division to schedule bulk pick-up services.** The appropriate phone number to schedule bulk pick-up should be

stenciled on the 300 gallon containers. The number of phone lines should be expanded as appropriate to accommodate additional phone calls.

Activity Leader: **Neighborhood organizations and Columbus Refuse Division.**

√ Activity: **Establish no parking zones near alley entrances to provide additional space for vehicles to maneuver.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Traffic Engineering and Parking Division.**

√ Activity: **Improve communications between residents and neighborhood organizations and the city of Columbus.**

Activity Leader: **Near East Area Commission (NEAC).**

√ Activity: **Publicize the services and phone number of the Mayor's Action Center.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus, Community Support staff, South of Main neighborhood organizations, and Near East Area Commission (NEAC).**

√ Activity: **Conduct quarterly meetings with the Mayor.**

Activity Leader: **Community Relations Staff, Mayor's Office, and Near East Area Commission (NEAC).**

NEGLECTED & ABANDONED PROPERTY (CODE ENFORCEMENT)

● Problem

There are a number of poorly maintained commercial and residential buildings in the South of Main area. Some of these buildings are occupied, but many more are vacant and their deteriorated condition has a blighting effect on the community. Community members need clear information about city codes and the outcomes of enforcement actions. Code enforcement staff are stretched thin and need to devise innovative community partnerships, to have an ongoing impact in the South of Main area and deal effectively with chronic offenders.

● Priority Activities

√√ Activity: **The Code Enforcement Division will issue appropriate paint-up, fix-up, orders to owners of unoccupied properties currently in violation of City Codes.** Target date set to complete this task is May 15th, 1990. Code Enforcement will respond to inspection requests from the community for occupied property.

Activity Leader: **Columbus Regulations Division.**

√√ Activity: **There needs to be regular communication with the Task Force. Code Enforcement will inform Task Force of properties classified as high priority or those having the greatest impact on the community.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Regulations Division.**

● Additional Activities

√ Activity: **Neighborhood Task Force members will contact owners of neglected property by letter.** This will inform the owners of the community goals and alert the owners to any Code Enforcement concerns.

Activity Leader: **Neighborhood Task Force.**

√ Activity: **Code Enforcement will request neighborhood participation in problem cases. In certain cases criminal charges will have negligible effect.** For these cases, the City will inform the community and request neighborhood participation in civil cases initiated by the City against owners.

Activity Leader: **Columbus Regulations Division and community residents.**

√ Activity: **The Task Force will identify properties that are occupied on a priority basis for inspections.** The most flagrant and serious of violations of Housing and Zoning Codes will be referred to Code Enforcement first.

Activity Leader: **Neighborhood Task Force.**

√ Activity: **Task Force will become knowledgeable regarding Housing Code mandated enforcement procedures.** Code Enforcement will provide copies of the Housing Codes for Task Force members to read and become familiar with. Task Force will act as liaison between Code Enforcement and community members.

Activity Leader: **Neighborhood Task Force and Columbus Regulations Division.**

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

- **Problem**

There is no network in place that links community-based organizations with each other or the overall community. Individual organizations are often narrow in focus and opportunities to share organizational and community resources are under used. Most residents are not aware of the number of services and activities available in the community; a community information program is needed that is ongoing, useful, and understandable to all residents. It is hard to keep people engaged and excited...to keep momentum. Community activities need to do more than share information; they need to create hope and a sense of empowerment through exposing individuals to new experiences, people, and places.

- **Priority Activities**

√√ Activity: **Create a community-based Neighborhood Round Table.** The round table would be comprised of organizational and community representatives. The purpose of the round table would be to look at issues that build a sense of community by concerning itself with long term community expectations and goals. The round table would act as a bridge between organizations and residents by containing the elements of all of the resources existing in the South of Main community.

Activity Leader: **Community-based organizations and community residents.**

√√ Activity: **Use Neighborhood Round Table to generate and sustain community-wide excitement and momentum by networking with community organizations and residents and serving as a clearing house for sharing ideas and resources.**

Activity Leader: **Neighborhood Round Table, community organizations, and community residents.**

- **Additional Activities**

√√ Activity: **Create a “community organization and activity calendar.”** The calendar will serve as a useful directory of community services, events, and organizations. It could be created by neighborhood youth in partnership with Blackburn Recreation Center and under supervision of the same individual secured to set up the community round table.

Activity Leader: **Neighborhood Round Table, community organizations, and community residents.**

√ Activity: **Hire an individual to organize and set up the Neighborhood Round Table.** Hire an individual with the skills necessary to work in collaboration with community groups and residents to set up and staff the Round Table (preference given to hiring a neighborhood resident). This could also be a part-time position held by a VISTA Volunteer and be supplemented by interns from OSU Graduate Schools of Planning and Public Administration.

Activity Leader: **To be determined.**

√ Activity: **The Neighborhood Round Table will sponsor a series of informational community meetings that will feature the work of local organizations and focus on other topics of interest to community members.**

Activity Leader: **Neighborhood Round Table.**

EMPLOYMENT AND JOB TRAINING

- **Problem**

There is a high unemployment and incarceration rate in the community. Individuals lack basic employment skills and literacy rates are low. There needs to be a greater commitment to job training in the neighborhood, improving literacy skills, and providing the types of services that will help individuals access training programs (child care, transportation, etc.). Support entrepreneurial efforts that will employ area residents.

- **Priority Activity**

√√ Activity: **Link job creation and entrepreneurial opportunity together to create a common goal of economic revitalization in the community.** There are many small businesses in the South of Main area that have the potential to create jobs for local residents. The community resources that are available, such as the Urban League, Redwood Development Corporation, and Teams 2000, can facilitate training programs for the residents and assist in providing incentives for small businesses.

Activity Leader: **All major community organizations that are located in the South of Main CRA. These organizations have a vested interest in the area and programs in place that can produce the results needed.**

- **Additional Activity**

√ Activity: **Create literary centers in the community for residents to improve basic literacy skills and apply these skills in the job market.** Basic literary skills are essential to obtain employment and be competitive in the work force. Utilizing programs such as adopt-a-school can bring new awareness to the literacy problem that exists in the community.

Activity Leader: **Columbus Public Schools.**

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

- **Problem**

It is felt that business retention and expansion is not supported by financial institutions; better relationships need to be developed between the community and lenders. It is not clear what businesses want and need in order to stay or develop in the area. In addition, community assets need to be identified. A comprehensive market analysis is needed to address these problems, as well as provide future guidance and assist the community in identifying ways to return environmentally damaged sites to productive uses.

- **Priority Activity**

√√ Activity: **Develop a neighborhood council that has a primary responsibility of marketing the neighborhood.** The interaction of businesses in the area must rely on aggressive promotion from within the community to stimulate more positive responses from financial institutions. Merchants and residents must work together to promote a more desirable image.

Activity Leader: **Area businesses and community residents.**

√√ Activity: **Devise/investigate a joint resident and business initiative. Cooperative type of structure.**

Activity Leader: **Neighborhood Round Table, community residents, area businesses, lenders, City of Columbus, and Chamber of Commerce.**

- **Additional Activities**

√ Activity: **Provide a comprehensive market analysis and economic development plan for the South of Main CRA that would highlight the strengths and advantages of the area and attract new business.** Incentives can be used to attract businesses and promote growth in the area.

Activity Leader: **Columbus Development Department's Planning and Neighborhood Development Divisions.**

√ Activity: **Provide one City employee to act as a liaison between the South of Main CRA and the city.** This would give area residents and businesses the opportunity of direct access to a person who's office is in the community and reduce response time for issues that are vital.

Activity Leader: **Columbus Development Department's Neighborhood Development Division.**

FAMILY SERVICES, YOUTH AND RECREATION

- **Problem**

There are not enough activities available for area youth and their families. Program development will need to address issues of safety and the very real need for transportation. Activities are needed for all age groups, especially older youth ages 18 to 21. Activities should include, but not be limited to recreation; there should also be educational and cultural enrichment opportunities. There is no summer baseball or softball, as the South off Main area has no ball field. Blackburn Recreation Center is felt to be under staffed, especially given its importance to neighborhood youth and potential for community-based activities of all ages.

- **Priority Activities**

√√ Activity: **Knowledge of program activities through the use of one common newsletter.**

Activity Leader: **Neighborhood Association, Main Street Business Association, and community leaders.**

√√ Activity: **Provide more police visibility in the South of Main community.**

Activity Leader: **Columbus Police Division and area businesses.**

√√ Activity: **Reactivate the gang prevention unit of the police juvenile bureau by reintroducing it into the community.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus.**

- **Additional Activities**

√ Activity: **Involve neighborhood in public safety programs to decrease fear of involvement.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus (including Police Division), community leaders, Neighborhood Association, Main Street Business Association.**

√ Activity: **Form neighborhood association involving Parents Club and other area groups (churches, area youth workshop group, schools, area businesses) to facilitate networking within the community.**

Activity Leader: **Parent's Club, Blackburn Recreations Center, community churches and schools, area businesses, and social service agencies (associates could include: United Way, Police Athletic League, Boys/Girls Clubs, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Police and Fire Stations, other local government agencies, and The Main Street Business Association).**

√ Activity: **Investigate the possibility of little league sports and find a location in the community for a baseball/softball diamond.**

Activity Leader: **Parents Club, City of Columbus, and area businesses.**

√ Activity: **Encourage more community involvement and lobbying against juvenile crime, for example, copycat or "wanna be" gang participation. In other words, if the youth can't join the gang of choice, they will form another gang, or they may form a gang in order to protect themselves from others.**

Activity Leader: **Parent's Club, City of Columbus (Police Division), community leaders, and area businesses.**

√ Activity: **Investigate the possibility of more staff for peak times at Blackburn Recreation Center.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus.**

√ Activity: **Develop a community Parent's Club as an off-shoot of the Blackburn Recreation Center Advisory Council, using Blackburn and other area locations (churches, schools, businesses) for meeting places.** This activity will make adults more visible in the community and at the center.

Activity Leader: **South of Main Family Services, Youth and Recreation Task Force, Blackburn Recreation Center Advisory Council, City of Columbus, area businesses, and community members.**

√ Activity: **Recruit volunteers to work within Blackburn to assist with center monitoring, coaching, tutoring and organizing activities for area youths and their families.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus, Community Parent's Club, Blackburn Recreation Center Advisory Council, and community businesses.**

√ Activity: **Develop a program which would allow area youth to do community work (geared to their age) at Blackburn or other community businesses, churches or agencies in exchange for entrance to the swimming pool.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus, Parent's Club, Civic Organizations, and area businesses.**

√ Activity: **Recruit friends, families and neighbors to get involved in community organizations through a major registration drive.**

Activity Leader: **Neighborhood Association, Main Street Business Association, and community leaders.**

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT & REHABILITATION

- **Problem**

There are many vacant and boarded residences in the reinvestment area. These structures are unsafe, discourage investment in adjacent properties, and create a perception of neighborhood decline. There needs to be low interest loans available for housing rehabilitation. These loans need to be made available to homeowners, developers, and investors in order to encourage property maintenance and improvements. Grant money should be set aside for use by senior citizens, and others on fixed incomes, experiencing financial need. Programs are needed that will develop and support “nice affordable housing,” that is decent, safe and sanitary. Speculative housing purchases should be discouraged and vacant lots should be returned to a productive community use (side yards, pocket parks, community gardens, infill, etc.).

- **Priority Activity**

√√ Activity: **Provide city-sponsored low-interest loans for developers, homeowners and investors.** Set aside grants targeting senior citizens, handicapped and those on fixed incomes. Establish an acquisition rehab program.

Activity Leader: **Columbus Neighborhood Development Division loan leveraging program, banking institutions using CRA funds, Ohio Housing Finance Agency (OHFA) utilizing link deposit funds.**

√√ Activity: **Provide adequate resources for housing rehabilitation.** Reevalue the possibility of refinancing existing City loans for senior citizens.

Activity Leader: **Federal Government, HUD, City of Columbus, and local lenders.**

√√ Activity: **Provide incentives for homeownership with rehabilitation and/or new construction.** Discourage and protect community from “get rich quick” investors. Require that loan applicant live in home for at least five years.

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus and Franklin County.**

√√ Activity: **Clean-up vacant lots, landscape and maintain.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus, State of Ohio, and Federal Government. Do not use available CDBG money.**

√√ Activity: **Use small vacant lots as side yards for adjacent homeowner or as small parks.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus.**

√√ Activity: **Ensure quality work by city licensed Rehab Contractors (establish Performance Standards).**

Activity Leader: **HUD (CMHA).**

- **Additional Activities**

√ Activity: **Provide market rate owner-occupied housing. Establish standards to determine market rate.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus, State of Ohio, and Federal Government. Do not use money already available.**

√ Activity: **Establish a land banking program whereby the City acquires vacant lots that can be sold to adjacent homeowner for one dollar.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus.**

√ Activity: **Implement a residential tax abatement program to assist homeowners with purchasing market rate housing units.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus.**

√ Activity: **Encourage architecturally compatible infill on lots that are appropriately sized according to code.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus.**

√ Activity: **Provide residential tax abatement as an incentive for a homeownership opportunity.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus and Franklin County.**

√ Activity: **Create a brochure or checklist outlining housing program. (Rehab Purchase, etc.)**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus and Franklin County.**

√ Activity: **Assist Rehabilitation applicants in ensuring that bond requirements are being met by contractors.**

Activity Leader: **City of Columbus and applicant.**

CURRENT IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITY

City staff is working with the National Black Programming Consortium to implement the youth component of the neighborhood reinvestment planning process. The five week program will focus on teaching reinvestment area youth media literacy and hands on instruction with film and video production.

City staff is working with a neighborhood leader who submitted a proposal to operate a summer youth program for the South of Main neighborhood. The program focuses on academics, physical development, community service and social skills.

City staff plan to meet with community residents at the Open House seeking input on the housing rehabilitation program available to the community

NEXT STEPS

The Neighborhood Development Division will meet with the community to develop an implementation plan for the South of Main reinvestment area. We will use the South of Main Reinvestment Area Report and Action Plan as our starting point.

City staff will meet with the community quarterly or on an as needed basis for the following reasons:

- to update the community on the status of activities and projects
- to facilitate the development of programs and projects with non-city related agencies and programs.
- to report relevant information and activities of focused smaller subcommittee groups to the larger committee.

City staff will be available to respond to questions and concerns from individuals or neighborhood groups in the community.

The Neighborhood Development Division will establish a partnership with the community and will commit to working with each neighborhood for at least three years.

City staff will encourage community review of planned priorities on an annual basis.

THANK YOU

The success of the reinvestment workshops is directly attributable to the active participation of community members living and working in the South of Main area. Many other individuals and organizations played a supporting role by helping to organize for the workshops, facilitating discussion groups, providing technical expertise, and distributing information.
Workshop and Task Force Participants

Workshop and Task Force Facilitators

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- County Savings Bank
- Fifth/Third Bank
- Household Bank
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- National City Bank
- NBD Bank
- Society National Bank
- Star Bank
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and

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